

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-04

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R 061123Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3503

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 2237

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, NL

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF HOUSING'S COMMENTS ON CABINET REJECTION
OF GON DEFENSE WHITE PAPER

REF: THE HAGUE 2189 AND 2187

1. IN LUNCHEON CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE ON MAY 3
MINISTER OF HOUSING GRUIJTERS PUT DIFFERENT SLANT ON CABINET'S
REJECTION OF MOD'S DRAFT WHITE PAPER. GRUIJTERS CONFIRMED
THAT PROBLEM WAS THE AMOUNT OF FUNDING INVOLVED AND EMPHASIZED THAT
VREDELING WAS ASKING FOR AN AVERAGE ANNUAL 3.75 PERCENT
OF GNP, IN THE CABINET'S VIEW, AN UNACCEPT-
ABLE INCREASE OVER THE PRESENT GOING RATE OF APPROXIMATELY
3.55 PERCENT (OUR INFORMATION IS 3.66 PERCENT).

2. GRUIJTERS INDICATED THAT VREDELING HAD BEEN "GOTTEN
TO" BY HIS SENIOR GENERALS AND ADMIRALS WHO HAD CON-
VINCED HIM THAT THEIR COMMANDS SIMPLY HAD TO HAVE
ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF EXPENSIVE EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN A
VIABLE AND CREDITABLE DEFENSE POSTURE. THE REAL PROBLEM,
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HOWEVER, WAS VREDELING'S DETERMINATION TO BUILD UP

THE NETHERLANDS ARMED FORCES SUBSTANTIALLY IN SUPPORT OF VREDELING'S HOPES AND AMBITIONS FOR A EUROPEAN DEFENSE FORCE THAT COULD STAND ON ITS OWN FEET. RECALLING THAT VREDELING AS A MILITANT EUROPEAN "FEDERALIST" AND A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIMENT BEFORE RETURNING TO NATIONAL POLITICS, GRUIJTERS SAID VREDELING NURTURED THE BELIEF THAT WITH A LITTLE MORE EFFORT AND A LOT MORE INTEGRATION THE WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES COULD BEEF UP THEIR CONVENTIONAL POWER TO REDUCE THEIR DEPENDENCE ON THE US AND IMPROVE THEIR POSTURE VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIETS. THE CHARGE RECALLED THAT VREDELING HAD ESPOUSED THIS THEME AT A RECENT DIPLOMATIC LUNCHEON WHICH HE HAD ADMITTED WAS PREDICATED ON A DIMINUTION OF THE ROLE OF NUCLEAR FORCES. GRUIJTERS SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY THOUGHT THAT THIS WAS CONCEPTUAL NONSENSE AND IMPLIED THAT HE WAS NOT ALONE IN THE CABINET IN THINKING SO.

3. GRUIJTERS MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE MAINTENANCE OF AN ADEQUATE DUTCH DEFENSE EFFORT BUT HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO ACCEPT VREDELING'S INITIAL PROPOSAL BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE COST A GREAT DEAL MORE MONEY IN SUPPORT OF AN OBJECTIVE WHICH THE MAJORITY OF THE CABINET DID NOT APPROVE. GRUIJTERS MINIMIZED THE RISK OF ANY SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR CABINET SOLIDARITY. VREDELING HAD PUT ON A GOOD SHOW OF INDIGNATION BUT GRUIJTERS ANTICIPATED THAT PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL AND VREDELING WOULD SETTLE THE DISAGREEMENT PRIVATELY. VREDELING WOULD COME BACK WITH A WHITE PAPER FUNDED AT APPROXIMATELY CURRENT LEVELS OF EXPENDITURE AND IT WOULD BE APPROVED.

4. CHARGE EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING FOR COMPETING DEMANDS BY HIGH PRIORITY DOMESTIC PROGRAMS (SUCH AS GRUIJTERS' OWN RESPONSIBILITIES FOR GOVERNMENT-SUBSIDIZED HOUSING) AND DEVELOPMENT AID. CHARGE MADE POINT, HOWEVER, THAT FROM US AND NATO POINT OF VIEW IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT WHITE PAPER BE FUNDED AT LEVEL THAT WOULD PERMIT ACQUISITION OF KEY MATERIEL ITEMS SUCH AS REPLACEMENT FIGHTERS.

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5. UNTIL WE LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE CABINET'S REJECTION OF THE PRELIMINARY DRAFT WHITE PAPER WE WILL RESERVE JUDGMENT ON GRUIJTERS' APPARENT CONFIDENCE THAT NEITHER THE SOLIDARITY OF THE CABINET NOR THE MAINTENANCE OF A STRONG DUTCH DEFENSE POSTURE WITHIN NATO HAS BEEN JEOPARDIZED.
TANGUY

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